

IN THE CLAIMS:

21. (Previously Presented) A method of retaining a sealing element in a drilling head, comprising:

disposing the sealing element in a rotating portion of the drilling head;

radially moving a retainer toward the sealing element using fluid pressure behind a piston to force the piston toward the retainer, the retainer being at least partially disposed in the rotating portion; and

radially engaging the sealing element with the retainer while maintaining a portion of the retainer in the rotating portion.

22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, wherein the retainer is disposed between the sealing element and the rotating portion prior to engagement with the sealing element.

23. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, further comprising allowing the rotating portion to rotate relative to a non-rotating portion while maintaining the engagement of the sealing element with the retainer.

24. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, further comprising actuating movement of the retainer from a location remote to the retainer.

25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, wherein using fluid pressure behind the piston to force the piston toward the retainer comprises using hydraulic pressure to force the piston toward the retainer.

26. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, wherein using fluid pressure behind the piston to force the piston toward the retainer comprises using pneumatic pressure to force the piston toward the retainer.

27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, wherein the fluid pressure behind the piston forces the retainer radially inward toward the sealing element.
28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, wherein the piston is an annular piston.
29. (Previously Presented) A drilling head, comprising:
- a) a non-rotating portion;
 - b) a sealing element disposed within the non-rotating portion;
 - c) a retainer ring radially disposed about the sealing element; and
 - d) an annular piston radially disposed about the sealing element and aligned with the retainer ring.
30. (Previously Presented) The drilling head of claim 29, wherein the retainer ring radially engages the sealing element by using fluid pressure behind the annular piston.
31. (Previously Presented) The drilling head of claim 30, wherein actuation of the annular piston is remotely controlled.
32. (Previously Presented) The drilling head of claim 29, wherein a second retainer ring is disposed between the drilling head and a body surrounding the drilling head, the second retainer ring being adapted to retain the drilling head with the body.
33. (Previously Presented) The drilling head of claim 32, wherein a second annular piston is engageable with the second retainer ring.
34. (Previously Presented) The drilling head of claim 29, further comprising a rotating portion disposed between the sealing element and the non-rotating portion, the rotating portion comprising a first cavity for the retainer ring and a second cavity for the annular piston.

35. (Previously Presented) The drilling head of claim 29, further comprising a lower body and an upper body coupled to the lower body and wherein the sealing element is enclosed therein.

36. (Previously Presented) The drilling head of claim 35, wherein the lower body and the upper body are coupled in a sealing relationship.

37. (Previously Presented) A drilling head, comprising:
a sealing element; and
a body having a cavity formed therein, the sealing element being at least partially enclosed in the cavity and the body having at least two ends adapted to be coupled to adjoining members.

38. (Previously Presented) The drilling head of claim 37, wherein the body comprises a lower body and an upper body, wherein the lower body and the upper body are coupled in a sealing relationship therebetween.

39. (Previously Presented) The drilling head of claim 38, wherein the lower body comprises a lower attachment member and the upper body comprises an upper attachment member to attach the drilling head to one or more adjacent structures.

40. (Previously Presented) The drilling head of claim 37, further comprising a retainer coupled to the drilling head to allow the sealing element to be fastened or released from the drilling head.

41. (Previously Presented) The drilling head of claim 37, further comprising a housing coupled to the sealing element wherein an opening formed in the body is sufficiently sized to allow the housing to be lifted through the body.

42. (Previously Presented) The drilling head of claim 37, further comprising a housing at least partially surrounding the sealing element and a fastening member

disposed radially outward from housing and adapted to releasably couple the housing to the body.

43. (Previously Presented) The drilling head of claim 42, further comprising a piston engageable with the fastening member and disposed in a piston cavity.

44. (Previously Presented) The drilling head of claim 43, further comprising a first port fluidically coupled to a first portion of the piston cavity and a second port fluidically coupled to a second portion of the piston cavity, wherein the first port allows fluid into the first portion of the piston cavity and the second port allows fluid into the second portion of the piston cavity to override fluid pressure in the first portion of the piston cavity.

45. (Previously Presented) A method of releasing a sealing element from a drilling head, comprising:

disengaging a retainer from a sealing element by use of an annular piston radially disposed about the sealing element; and

removing the sealing element from the drilling head while retaining rotating portions of the drilling head with non-rotating portions of the drilling head.

46. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 45, further comprising separating the sealing element from a housing disposed in the drilling head prior to removing the sealing element from the drilling head.

47. (Previously Presented) A method of retaining a sealing element in a drilling head, comprising:

disposing the sealing element in a rotating portion of the drilling head;

radially moving a retainer toward the sealing element, the retainer being at least partially disposed in the rotating portion;

radially engaging the sealing element with the retainer while maintaining a portion of the retainer in the rotating portion; and

using bearings to allow rotation between the rotating portion and a non-rotating portion wherein the bearings are pre-loaded by a force exerted on the bearing.

48. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 47, further comprising maintaining the pre-loading on the bearing from a location remote to the bearing by controlling the pressure of the fluid.

49. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 47, further comprising altering the pre-loading on the bearing by adjusting fluid pressure exerted on the bearing.

50. (Previously Presented) A drilling head, comprising:
a non-rotating portion;
a sealing element disposed within the non-rotating portion;
a retainer ring radially disposed about the sealing element;
an annular piston radially disposed about the sealing element and aligned with the retainer ring; and
a flange disposed on each end of the drilling head.

51. (Previously Presented) A method of retaining a sealing element in a drilling head, comprising:
disposing the sealing element in a rotating portion of the drilling head; and
introducing fluid pressure behind a piston, thereby forcing a retainer radially inward toward the sealing element to radially engage the sealing element relative to the rotating portion, the retainer being at least partially disposed in the rotating portion.